

General Information

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Contracting Office Address

Environmental Protection Agency, e-Rulemaking Program Management Office.

Description

EPA is conducting market research for the requirement described herein. This is a **REQUEST FOR INFORMATION (RFI)**. This is not a formal solicitation or a request for proposals. This RFI is for information and planning purposes only and is not to be construed as a commitment by the Government. The eRulemaking Program Management Office (PMO) is seeking to determine if Federal Agencies and/or companies are interested in providing production hosting services for the eRulemaking Initiative's Federal Docket Management System (FDMS). This hosting service will consist of facilities and supporting information technology, staff and management infrastructure needed to support the FDMS. See Section 1.3 below, and corresponding sections, regarding limitations on submissions. A complete copy of this RFI can be found at <http://www.epa.gov/oam/hpod> under the sources sought section.

1. INTRODUCTION

This request identifies a spectrum of services that agencies and/or companies could furnish to host the FDMS in the context of a highly fault-tolerant service agreement-based environment. The hosting services being considered span a continuum from "Basic Hosting Services" to "Comprehensive Hosting Services":

- **Basic Hosting Services** – Provide only basic computing, communications, and security infrastructure and operational support to enable Federal agency or contractor personnel to procure, install, and operate FDMS systems within the host's facility.
- **Comprehensive Hosting Services** – May include, but is not limited to, providing all computing servers/services (production, development, and test), management, monitoring, and administration; help desk; license management, performance, availability, compliance and policy monitoring and event reporting; physical and application security, backup and

redundancy support; intrusion and virus prevention and detection; hardware and software upgrades and enhancements.

The final level of FDMS hosting service selected (if any) on this “basic” to “comprehensive” continuum will be determined through a cost and benefit analysis to be conducted at a later stage.

2.1 Scope

The eRulemaking Initiative is divided into distinct modules that focus on transformation of the current federal regulatory development, docket, and comment process. Ultimately, the Initiative will provide a single Web-based electronic access point to all Federal dockets, facilitating the public comment submission and management process, docket content management, and regulatory content development.

A Federal or private provider with a significant track record of exemplary service will host the FDMS. An environment that provides high performance and availability, a high degree of scalability, leading physical and network security, best practice monitoring and reporting, and application management is required. The PMO recognizes that some services, such as staffing trained personnel capable of installing FDMS software, may be potential capabilities of the provider rather than existing capabilities.

2.2 Objectives

Obtain information that will lead to the identification of providers for FDMS hosting through a Survey of Hosting Service Provider Capabilities. The structure of the survey focuses on gathering information concerning the candidates’ ability and experience in delivering hosting services, ranging from “Basic Hosting Services” to “Comprehensive Hosting Services” as described in the Introduction. Candidates need not offer all elements of “Comprehensive” to be considered a viable candidate. Hosting services under consideration will include both commercial hosting services and Federal agencies. The Comprehensive Hosting Service provider will maintain all aspects of the physical FDMS production, development, and testing environments with the exception of software development items. Software will be forwarded to the provider for installation following unit, system, user, and integration testing (as applicable) in the development and testing environments. The following services are expected for the “Comprehensive” option:

1. Procurement, upgrade, and management of all computing, application, and telecommunication systems required to meet performance, reliability, availability, and data integrity requirements of the Production FDMS.
2. Full asset lifecycle management (hardware systems, software licenses).
3. Full range of production, test, and development server operations and management.
4. Infrastructure, production application service environment monitoring, and administration.
5. Management and administration of testing and development environment.
6. Backup and restore services.

7. Business continuity/disaster recovery services (major subsystem failures and loss of facility).
8. Physical, procedural and logical (electronic) security assurance/partitioning – facility, communication system, applications; data by programs/projects, sensitivity, and function (production, test, development).
9. Effective partitioning of FDMS production, test and development system and other host system (physically or logically) to ensure a secure, stable, high performance, and user access/information exchange.
10. Massive storage scalability, including high speed central data stores.
11. High performance scaleable internal and external telecommunications to support optimal FDMS operation and citizen/agency access and information exchange.
12. Monitoring and reporting – event reporting, Service Level Agreement (SLA) compliance/performance (application performance, availability, policy/procedure compliance).
13. End-to-end problem detection through problem resolution.
14. Help desk services.
15. Hosting vendor compensation methods – proven cost recovery methods and support for performance-based compensation.

1.3 Submission Requirements

This survey is intended to determine the current market capabilities and capacities associated with these services. This is not a solicitation announcement for proposals and no contract will be awarded from this announcement. No reimbursement will be made for any costs associated with information provided in response to this announcement and any follow-up requests. No telephone calls requesting a solicitation will be accepted or acknowledged. There is no solicitation available at this time.

Capability statements shall not exceed 30 pages and standard company brochures will not be reviewed. Information shall focus on the capability to provide some or all of the host environment services defined above and follow the organization and content guidelines described within the Hosting Services Information Request. Organizations capable of providing some or all of the services described above are invited to submit, in writing, sufficient information within the page limitation that demonstrates their ability to deliver those services.

Responses should be submitted via email to voss.oliver@epa.gov and kerwin.michael@epa.gov in Microsoft Word-compatible formats no later than thirty (30) days after the date of this announcement. Hard copies can be mailed to the following address:

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
ATTN: Michael Kerwin (Mail Code: 2822V)
1200 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20460

Hand Carry/Courier/Overnight Carrier Address:

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
ATTN: Michael Kerwin, e-Rulemaking
1301 Constitution Avenue, NW
Room 6130C
Washington, D.C. 20460

The Point Of Contact for this requirement is Oliver Voss at (202) 564-4514 for acquisition related questions and Michael Kerwin at (202)632-0344, kerwin.michael@epa.gov for technical related questions.

HOSTING SERVICE INFORMATION REQUEST

1.4 Content and Organization of Response

Please organize your submittal using the following sections and provide the requested information within this outline.

1. **Executive Summary of Capabilities and Benefits.** Describe your services, scope of operation, capabilities, facilities locations, etc. and provide an assessment of the benefits/value your hosting service(s) would bring to the eRulemaking Initiative.
2. **Service Component Discussion Areas.** Provide a high level description of your capabilities and approach to providing services in each area listed below (in order).
3. **Contact Information.** Provide contact information for key technical and managerial personnel who can clarify and elaborate on your hosting services and your response to this information request.

Total page count is not to exceed 30 pages of text and graphics. Body text will be 12 point Arial font; tables and graphics text will be no smaller than 10 point Arial. Foldouts will count as two pages.

3.1 Service Component Discussion Areas

Different facets of a comprehensive hosting service are listed below. Please address the extent to which these types of services are offered, and expand on your approach and capabilities as appropriate. Note that hosting service providers that offer a limited range of service alternatives may still be an acceptable option for the eRulemaking FDMS program. FDMS may ultimately utilize a subset of the hosting services described below. Where examples of types and ranges of services are included after a specific service area, the intent is to clarify or bound the specific areas of interest and range of the services. In responding to the following service components, please describe how the delivery of such services relate to industry best practices. The respondent is free to expand their discussion on any area as they feel appropriate.

Specific services are to be discussed in the order listed:

1. **Procurement, upgrade, and management of all computing, application, and telecommunication systems required to meet performance, reliability, availability, and data integrity requirements of the Production FDMS**

A variety of approaches to provide these services is possible. Examples of alternatives are shown below the responder is not limited to only these alternatives. Please characterize the range of alternatives you support and your approach to delivering these services to your clients.

The core service is to provide basic Information Technology infrastructure (internal and external communications, power, heating/ventilating/air conditioning (HVAC), physical and electronic security) with a variety of approaches to hosting applications on that infrastructure. In this section the term customer refers to the Government and/or another entity designated by the Government. For example:

- Customer-specific hardware/software (HW/SW) owned, installed, and operated by the customer on your infrastructure.
- Customer specific HW/SW owned, installed and operated by customer with simple and emergency maintenance (e.g., tape back-up pulls, hard drive/power supply swaps) handled by host staff.
- Customer-specific HW/SW owned by the customer but installed and operated by host staff.
- Customer-specific HW/SW purchased as needed when the hosting agency determines it is required to support service and performance agreements (owned and managed by the hosting agency).
- Host agency allocates existing HW/SW resources from existing operations and expands these resources as needed to support agreed-upon service and performance commitments to the customer. All HW/SW is owned by the hosting agency and may be shared, used, or both by multiple customers.

Briefly describe your internal and external communications, computing and storage capabilities; and your ability to scale these capabilities on demand.
Indicate which platforms you are staffed and provisioned to support (hardware and operating systems).

2. Full asset lifecycle management (hardware systems, software licenses)

A variety of approaches to provide these services is possible. Examples of alternatives are shown below the responder is not limited to only these alternatives. Please characterize the range of alternatives you support and your approach to delivering these services to your clients.

- Asset management and system upgrades/maintenance planning is the customers' responsibility.

- Asset management and system upgrades are managed and recommendations for system enhancements are made based on total cost of ownership, best practices, and the systems' current and projected ability to satisfy service and performance agreements.
- Customer procures systems based on hosting service recommendation.
- Hosting service procurement(s) are based on project need; costs are recovered through agreed-upon methods.
- Hosting service procurements are based on all clients served by the facility; portions of the cost are recovered from each customer according to SLA.

Do you apply any particular tools, methods, or processes to aid in decision-making and execution management of the integration and retirement process? Are any performance and asset management tools used to aid in this process?

3. Full range of production, test, and development server operations and management

A variety of approaches to provide these services is possible. Examples of alternatives are shown below the responder is not limited to only these alternatives. Please characterize the range of alternatives you support and your approach to delivering these services to your clients.

- Provide office space and client access to perform operations and management tasks for FDMS production, test and development systems.
- Provide office space for client and share operations and management functions with the customer, but under hosting service policies and procedures. Frequently, Hosting Service providers place more stringent controls on production systems than test and development.
- Operation and management of all systems housed within the hosting facility are performed by the hosting service. Client requests installation of tested production application software on production servers. The hosting service staff installs and configures all systems. Test and development systems are typically supported on separate client facilities or on isolated test and development environment.

When a client identifies new applications, system upgrades/code modules, or hardware, what processes are required to certify its operation within production, test, and development environments and deploy it within the hosting environment? What transition time frames are typically involved? Are there specific restrictions associated with products that can be operated within the hosting environment (products, operating system, currency of application and operating system, communication protocols supported, etc.)? What hours of operation are staffed with application system support personnel? What hours will the client have access to the facility? Are you structured to support 24/7 operations? If so, what types of operations (back-up, restore, recovery, continuity; security storage scalability; telecom; monitoring and reporting; problem detection; help desk services) and to what degree are they supported (to what degree can they be scaled on demand)?

4. Infrastructure, production application service environment monitoring, and administration

A variety of approaches to provide these services is possible. Examples of alternatives are shown below. The responder is not limited to only these approaches. Please characterize the range of alternatives you support and your approach to delivering these services to your clients.

- Hosting service focus on infrastructure operations and security with customer:
 - Allowed to operate their own application monitoring functions/tools.
 - Able to use host monitoring tools to monitor & administer.
- Host service is the only entity allowed to use monitoring equipment within the hosting facility. User access is through:
 - Standard interfaces.
 - Standard message and information exchange between host and customer systems.
 - Other alternatives.
- Hosting service has no formal structure and application focus, but provides customer access to host tools to monitor and administer their own application.
- Host agency monitors infrastructure, but no application-specific monitoring beyond active network connects is performed.

5. Testing and development environment management and administration

- What management, administration approaches, customer access, and controls are provided for development and test environments?
- What facilities are available?
- What type of separation of test and development from production is provided?

6. Backup and restore services

Please describe your approach to providing this service offering, in relation to industry best practices.

7. Business continuity/disaster recovery services

- Approach to providing rapid return to service after major system failure.
- Approach to providing rapid return to service after catastrophic loss of facility.

Please describe your service offerings for each area listed above, in relation to industry best practices.

8. Physical, procedural and logical (electronic) security assurance/partitioning – facility, communication system, applications; data by programs/projects, sensitivity, and function (production, test, development)

Please explain your approach to deliver services for multiple clients in the areas mentioned above for production, test and development environments.

9. Effective partitioning of FDMS production, test, development, and other host systems (physically or logically) to ensure secure, stable, high performance, and user access/information exchange

Please explain how your service delivery approach would satisfy stringent FDMS performance and SLAs in each of the areas listed above while operating within multiple client environments.

10. Massive storage scalability, including high speed central data stores

Please explain how your service delivery approach addresses this requirement.

11. High performance scalable internal and external telecommunications to support optimal FDMS operation and citizen/agency access and information exchange

Please explain how your service delivery approach addresses this requirement.

12. Monitoring and reporting – event reporting, SLA compliance/performance (application performance, availability, policy/procedure compliance)

Please explain how your service delivery approach addresses this requirement.

13. End-to-end problem detection through problem resolution

To what extent does your service offer support in this area? Base infrastructure only? Computing systems? Application operations and performance?

If you offer this comprehensive service, please explain how your service delivery approach addresses this requirement.

14. Help desk services

Please explain how your service delivery approach addresses this requirement.

- Support to customer application development and test staff.
- Support to end users of customer applications.

15. Hosting vendor compensation methods: Proven cost recovery methods and support for performance based compensation

Please describe:

- The range of compensation options available for customers seeking to procure host services.
- How you link performance with compensation.

- What methods of cost recovery are used (i.e. cost plus to fixed price managed services, etc.).

APPENDIX A – LIST OF ACRONYMS

CCTV	CLOSED CAPTION TELEVISION
COTS	COMMERCIAL-OFF-THE- SHELF
DBMS	DATABASE MANAGEMENT SYSTEM
FDMS	FEDERAL DOCKET MANAGEMENT SYSTEM
HVAC	HEATING/VENTILATING/AIR CONDITIONING
HW	HARDWARE
IT	INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY
KVM	KEYBOARD VIDEO MOUSE
LAN	LOCAL AREA NETWORK
OS	OPERATING SYSTEM
RFI	REQUEST FOR INFORMATION
SLA	SERVICE LEVEL AGREEMENT
SOW	STATEMENT OF WORK
SW	SOFTWARE

